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The Role of Identity Formation and Career Indecisiveness in Effective School-to-Work
Transitions for Students with Emotional and Behavioral Disabilities

Graduate Thesis/Project

Submitted to the Faculty

Of the School Psychology Program

College of Liberal Arts
ROCHESTER INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

By

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In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of
Master of Science and
Advanced Graduate Certificate

Rochester, New York

(date)

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Running head: THE ROLE OF IDENTITY FORMATION

The Role of Identity Formation and Career Indecisiveness in Effective School-to-Work

Transitions for Students with Emotional and Behavioral Disabilities

Elizabeth S. Garfield

Rochester Institute of Technology

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CHAPTER ONE

Overview of the Study

Many school districts devote the majority of their transition resources to those students that are graduating and continuing their education through college. However, only about 15% of ninth grade students go on to graduate high school and obtain a 4-year college degree within six years of their high school graduation (Morra, 1993). Schools focus their resources and curriculum on the college bound minority instead of the work bound majority (Levinson, 2002). This contributes to ineffective transition planning for those students going directly from school to work; and is especially true for students with Emotional/Behavioral disabilities (ED/BD). These students are leaving school unprepared to be gainfully employed because of a lack of knowledge about themselves, their abilities, and the abilities needed to be successful in a chosen career (Gati, Krausz, & Osipow, 1996). Many of these adolescents have not had the opportunity to explore career options through school sponsored work experiences or self motivated exploration, which contributes to their indecisiveness about their futures and the lack of a clearly formed identity (Benz & Halpern, 1993; Bluestien, Devenis, & Kidney, 1989).

This study investigated the role of identity diffusion and career indecision in effective transition planning for students with emotional and behavioral disturbances (ED/BD). It was hypothesized that EB/BD students will have more career indecision and identity diffusion than students who are not receiving special education services.

Definition of Terms

Transition - A coordinated set of activities for a student, designed within an outcome-oriented process that promotes movement from school to post-school activities including postsecondary

education, vocational training, integrated employment and independent living, community participation

ED/BD – A category of special education service under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

Identity Formation – Operationalized by Marcia (1966) as a two dimensional concept of crisis and commitment used to establish four identity statuses.

Identity Diffusion – One of four identity statuses used to describe individuals who may or may not have experienced a crisis period, but who characteristically lack an identity commitment.

Career Indecision – A lack of occupational commitment.

Delimitations

This study only included students with emotional/behavioral disabilities, not those under other categories of disability. It was not longitudinal in nature and represents only a snapshot of this samples career interests, identity formation, and career indecision.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

This review discusses the critical aspects of transition planning for students with disabilities, including legislative mandates and best practices, with particular attention given to those identified as ED/BD. The empirically defined characteristics of students with ED/BD will be provided, and their outcomes in the school-to-work transition will be discussed. These outcomes will be considered as part of one of the hallmarks of adolescents, identity formation, with a specific focus on the career decision making process.

Transition Plans

history.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 1990 (Public Law 94-142) made it clear that improved post school outcomes are a critical element of a free appropriate public education for students with disabilities. However, vocational services for students with disabilities have been in existence since the Second World War. Major legislation regarding vocational services was first enacted in the 1970s through three laws: the Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975, and the Vocational Education Amendments of 1976 (Szymanski & Danek, 1985).

Serving individuals with disabilities was greater emphasized in the 1990s with increased legislative action. The Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1992, a reauthorization of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, provided smoother service integration of identified students transitioning from public school to employment. The Tech-Prep Act came out of amendments to the Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Act. This legislation was designed to provide academic instruction centered on work or occupation through a competency-based

curriculum. It created a focus on functional academics, higher reasoning, and personal, life skills (Evers, 1996).

The School-to-Work Opportunities Act (STWOA) enacted in 1994 authorized state funding for the development of programs that improved the work related skills of school leavers. School-to-work programs must include the following activities: helping students with career selection through the provision of career awareness, exploration, and counseling services, as well as connect school based learning and work-based learning. Instruction should be provided in work attitudes, employability skills, and participation skills. All students must receive work experience, a planned program of job training and workplace mentoring (Phelps & Hanley-Maxwell, 1997)

Under IDEA 1990, all students with an identified disability were required to have transition plans within their Individual Education Plans (IEP) by the age of 16. The 1997 IDEA Amendments (Public Law 105-17) strengthened the existing transition concepts and mandates by focusing on how students' complete high school programs can be planned to foster success in high school and in their transition to post school employment or continuing education.

current legislation.

With the latest revisions of IDEA still awaiting final interpretation, some of the more critical regulations set forth by the 1997 Amendments were used for this review. The purpose of transition mandates are to ensure that all children with disabilities have available to them a free appropriate public education that emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs and prepare them for employment and independent living (IDEA Section 300.1). A clear and consistent definition of transition services is necessary for proper

implementation of these mandates. IDEA 1997 defines transition services as: a coordinated set of activities for a student with a disability that –

- (1) Is designed within an outcome-oriented process, that promotes movement from school to post school activities, including postsecondary education, vocational training, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult living, or community participation;
- (2) Is based on the individual student's needs, taking into account the student's preference and interests; and
- (3) Includes – instruction, related services, community experiences, the development of employment and other post-school, adult-living objectives; and if appropriate acquisition of daily living skills and function vocational evaluation (National Center on Secondary Education and Transition, 2002, p. 1-2).

A key aspect of this definition is the focus on individual student's preferences and interests. Schools must encourage student's development of interests through opportunities to explore their environment. It is critical that services be designed in an outcome oriented process that focuses on the appropriate transition for each student. The final outcome that guides the transition process should be successful long-term employment for the student, not simply high school graduation and a menial job. These services may be provided by the education agency, or by agencies outside the school. In either case, they must be written into the IEP and the responsible agency noted. The IEP must include –

- (1) for each student with a disability beginning at age 14 (or earlier if determined appropriate by the IEP team) and updated annually, a statement of the transition service needs of the student under applicable components of the student's IEP that focused on the student's

courses of study (such as participation in advanced placement courses or a vocational education program); and

- (2) For each student beginning at age 16 (or younger, if determined appropriate by the IEP team), a statement of needed transition services for the student, including if appropriate, a statement of the interagency responsibilities or any needed linkages (National Center on Secondary Education and Transition, 2002, p. 5).

A statement of transition service needs should relate directly to the student's goals beyond secondary education, and show how a well planned academic program is linked to their goals. For example, a student interested in exploring a career in computer science may have a statement of transition service needs connected to technology course work.

Final regulations implementing IDEA require that for students, beginning no later than 14 years of age (or earlier if deemed appropriate), one of the purposes of the annual meeting will always be a discussion of transition services needed. Beginning at least by age 16, the discussion will also focus upon planning for needed transition services. In both these instances, the final regulations require that students be invited to attend their IEP meeting if a purpose of the meeting will be the consideration of the student's transition services needs. If the student does not attend the IEP meeting, the public agency shall take other steps to ensure that the student's preferences and interests are considered.

Transition services by definition are complex and long term in nature. Neither families, schools, adult services providers, state agencies, nor postsecondary institutions can carry the entire fiscal, programmatic, or planning responsibility for these services. Therefore IDEA seeks to create a collaboration between the student, family, school, and outside agencies in the planning process to increase the likelihood of a smooth transition from school to other service

systems and post-school settings. As such IDEA requires that, the public agency (school district) also shall invite a representative of any other agency that is likely to be responsible for providing or paying for transition services. If an agency invited to send a representative to a meeting does not do so, the public agency shall take other steps to obtain the participation of the other agency in the planning of any transition services.

The above is not a comprehensive presentation of IDEA regulations; it is limited to those regulations that may be considered critical for appropriate implementation and successful transitions. Regulations are important for outlining the legality of transition services; however, it then becomes the responsibility of the school to engage in best practice for providing transition services.

best practice and policy compliance.

Witte (2002) describes best practice in that, “Transition should not be viewed as a discrete event but as a life-long, never-ending process; a careful, well-planned process that will be years old before the intended outcomes begin to be reached; a process that over time will involve numerous individuals, and a process where all involved parties have responsibility and all share accountability” (p. 1588). Wehman (1996) recommends a multi-step process for developing and implementing individualized transition plans (ITPs). First, schools must organize Individual Transition Plan (ITP) teams for all transition-age students. The team should include the student, parents, special educators, vocational educators, as well as any adult service representatives, who may be brought into the process as early as two years prior to graduation. Next, person-centered planning should be used to identify the individual strengths and talents of the student and key activities that are thought to be essential for transition progress. The ITP should be directly connected to the student’s Individual Education Plan, which can be

accomplished by making the ITP meeting a part of the student's annual IEP meeting.

Implementing the ITP would follow, and should acknowledge that some services may be short

term, while others may be continuous for a period of years. Wehman (1996, p. 101-102)

identified three factors believed to be critical to successful ITP implementation. These include

“the involvement of ITP members who are knowledgeable about local services, the identification

all desired outcomes within the least restrictive service options, and community agencies

providing or obtaining all needed services.”

A policy study investigated implementation of the transition mandates of IDEA in nine sites across the United States (Hasazi, Furney & Destefano, 1999). Model sites, those with a national reputation of effective implementation of transition policies and practices, were characterized by six factors. Incorporation of system wide, student and family centered strategies was the first critical component. In these systems school personnel espoused values and beliefs that promoted the development of students' self-determination skills and increased student and family participation. The planning process focused on the student's personal goals, interests and needs. Meetings were structured to promote student and parent participation as well as to ensure that students and parents were central to the planning and evaluation processes. Students participated in preplanning meetings to help them organize their ideas for upcoming transition meeting (Hasazi, et al., 1999). Student participation in transition planning has been strongly encouraged by both IDEA regulations and research. In a study by McMahan and Baer (2001) 76% of participants indicated that students received a verbal invitation from a staff member to participate their IEP meeting in which transitions were to be discussed. Between 50 and 100% of participants reported interviewing and talking with students about future goals in order to enhance the opportunity for students to participate in activities geared towards decision making,

providing instruction and experiences in employability skills, and vocational or technical education (McMahan & Baer). Parent involvement was also identified by Kohler (1993) as a critical component of implementation of transition plans in review of 46 transition studies.

Interagency collaboration has been identified by a number of studies as an essential component of transition program implementation (Hasazi et al., 1999; Kohler, 1993; McMahan & Baer, 2001). These studies have noted positive student outcomes including high employment rates and enrollment in community college. Additional components to successful transition plan implementation identified by Hasazi et al. include: facilitation of systematic professional development, a visionary, supportive, and inclusive form of leadership, coordination of an integrated set of reform efforts, and emergence of connections among a variety of local and federal transition initiatives.

Three primary concerns were identified by the model sites (Hasazi et al., 1999). Participants felt that there was a critical need to increase student participation and leadership in the IEP/transition planning process. The model sites noted that future work should aim to improve and expand processes for using post-school outcome data to evaluate and improve programs. Additional concern was present that opportunities needed to be extended to youth labeled emotionally disturbed.

Even with clear support for the critical components necessary for effective transition planning and implementation, evidence exists that best practices are not being followed and students' needs are not being met. Benz and Halpern (1993) examined seven areas of student transition need including vocational training, post-secondary education, remedial academics, independent living skills training, income subsidy through government entitlements, social skills training, and residential placement to determine how well these areas of need were being met.

Vocational training and post-secondary education were seen as the greatest needs across all students. Approximately 40% of students with emotional disabilities were identified as needing specialized and regular vocational instruction. Of all students identified as needing both types of vocational instruction, 30% did not receive either type. Students identified with a Specific Learning Disability (SLD), Mild Mental Retardation (MMR), or a Severe Emotional Disturbance (SED) were least likely to receive this instruction. About 53% of all students with disabilities participated in school-sponsored work experience during their last year of high school. Work experience has been identified as an important component of successful transition plans (Phelps & Hanley-Maxwell, 1997). Only half of SED students participated in work experiences. As a result of lack of preparation for these work experiences, 46% of SED students were fired from a work experience job, as compared to 23% of SLD students and 28% of MMR students (Benz & Halpern). One third of students with SED received neither vocational instruction nor work experience during their last year of high school. Students with ED and LD were almost always least likely to have their transition needs addressed at the time they left school (Benz & Halpern).

Benz and Halpern (1993) identified four long standing and difficult issues associated with providing a comprehensive vocational curriculum that combined instruction and experience for students labeled SED or SLD, especially for those who are pursuing a regular high school diploma. These difficulties include the often restrictive nature of graduation requirements, the lack of trained school personnel who specifically focus on the vocational needs of these students, the lack of resources for providing vocational programs, and the lack of collaboration between schools, adult agencies, and the private sector for this population. The emergence of interagency teams and transition training for school personnel are emerging as some of the strongest predictors of policy compliance and best practice. This suggests the need for more training and

activities geared towards collaboration techniques in order for students to receive the most effective transition services (McMahan & Baer, 2001).

outcomes.

The National Longitudinal Transition Study of Special Education Students (NLTS) was congressionally mandated in 1983, and was sponsored by the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) of the U.S. Department of Education. The NLTS included more than 8,000 students who were ages 13 to 21 and in special education in secondary school in 1985, 800 of which were classified ED. The NLTS used multiple data-collection strategies in both 1987 and 1990, to shed light on characteristics of youth and their education experiences, social activities, post-school employment, independence, and use of adult services (Blackorby & Wagner, 1996).

The NLTS found that substantial gaps existed between the outcomes for students in general education and those with disabilities, this was especially true for those youth that were identified ED. The employment rate for students with disabilities lagged significantly behind that of youth in the general population both less than two years out of school (46% vs. 59%) and three to five years out school (57% vs. 69%). The percentage of ED students competitively employed was even less, 41% less than two years out of school and 47% three to five years out of school (Blackorby & Wagner, 1996). Researchers found that as time passed many more youth with disabilities had found competitive employment and those were largely full time positions, however, nearly one in five youth with disabilities were not employed and were not looking for work (Blackorby & Wagner). Completing secondary school appears to have significant benefits for students with disabilities. Three to five years after high school, graduates were significantly more likely to be employed than were peers who had dropped out (65% vs. 47%) or aged out (65% vs. 37%) (Blackorby & Wagner). Although poverty level wages were quite common for

youth with disabilities who were employed in their first two years after leaving high school, their wages were comparable to those earned by non-college youth of similar ages in the general population (Blackorby & Wagner).

Rates of youth with disabilities receiving postsecondary education were also rather low. Fourteen percent of youth with a disability reported attending some type of postsecondary school within two years of high school, as opposed to 53% of the general population (Blackorby & Wagner, 1996). These rates were slightly higher for youth identified as ED, with about 17% attending some postsecondary school within two years of high school (Blackorby & Wagner, 1996). Overall, the study found encouraging increases in employment rates, wages, and postsecondary school enrollment. These outcomes for some groups of youth with disabilities did not differ significantly from peers in the general population. However, substantial gaps did still exist, especially for youth identified as ED.

Emotional Disturbance

In order to understand why students with Emotional Disturbances (ED) have had such abysmal transition outcomes, it is necessary to understand the characteristics of this classification, and the youth who are given it. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) defines Emotional Disturbance as an educational disability in the following way:

(i) The term means a condition exhibiting one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and to a marked degree that adversely affects a child's educational performance:

(A) An inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors.

- (B) An inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers.
- (C) Inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances.
- (D) A general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression.
- (E) A tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems.

(ii) The term includes schizophrenia. The term does not apply to children who are socially maladjusted, unless it is determined that they have an emotional disturbance (Merrell, 2003, p. 34-35).

According to Merrell (2003) there is “widespread dissatisfaction” (p. 37) with the term and functional definition of emotional disturbance. He therefore offers an alternative definition which is accepted in many states. This definition uses the term Emotional or Behavioral Disorder (ED/BD) and is as follows:

(i) The term (EBD) means a disability characterized by behavioral or emotional responses in school so different from appropriate, age, cultural, or ethnic norms that they adversely affect educational performance. Educational performance includes academic, social, vocational, and personal skills. Such a disability

(A) is more than temporary, expected response to stressful events in the environment;

(B) is consistently exhibited in two different settings, at least one of which is school-related; and

(C) is unresponsive to direct intervention in general education or the child’s condition is such that general interventions would be insufficient.

(ii) Emotional and behavioral disorders can co-exist with other disabilities.

(iii) This category may include children or youth with schizophrenic disorders, affective disorders, anxiety disorders, or other sustained disturbances of conduct or adjustment when they adversely affect educational performance in accordance with section (i) (Merrell, p. 37).

There are approximately 475,000 U.S. students identified and provided special education under the category of ED, with the most numerous age group of students with ED being 15-year-olds (U.S. Department of Education, 2001). More than half of 12- to 17-year-old students with ED receive their education apart from peers without disabilities. In addition, students with ED drop out of high school at the highest rate (51%) of any category of students with disabilities (U.S. Department of Education, 2001). Lack of participation in regular school programs, or lack of attendance of school at all, makes transition planning for this population especially difficult. ED students may not feel that they are being appropriately prepared for life upon graduation and they may feel confused and frustrated about their futures. These feeling may lead to higher drop out rates and less successful transitions from school to work.

Davis and Vander Stoep (1997) found similarly negative outcomes for youth with ED through the transition from school to adult life as did the NLTS. They were consistently less employed, had lower incomes, more homelessness and arrests than their peers both in general education and with other disabilities. Adolescents with ED/BD have difficulty rating their own job performance, often rating it significantly higher than their supervisors in the areas of task-related social behavior, non-task-related social behavior, work performance, and general work behavior (Carter & Wehby, 2003). This discrepancy is often due to ED/BD adolescents' lack of awareness of important job related skills (Capella, Roessler, & Hemmerla, 2002).

An essential characteristic of youth making the transition from high school to the adult world is the “ongoing change in every area of biopsychosocial development” (Davis, 2003). These changes include moral, social, and sexual development, as well as identity formation. It is these changes that allow young adults to meet society’s expectations of them. Studies have shown that adolescents with emotional or behavioral difficulties are developmentally delayed in all areas of psychosocial development (Davis & Vander Stoep, 1997). In an examination of the educational performance of students with ED ages 9 to 17, Greenbaum et al. (1996) found 58% to performing below grade level in reading and 93% below grade level in math. Youth with ED have been shown to have relationship problems both in school and in the work environment (Bullis, Nishioka-Evans, Fredericks, & Davis, 1993; Cullinan & Sabornie, 2004). This academic, social and psychological immaturity leaves them less prepared for the transition from adolescence to adulthood.

Identity Formation

Identity formation is a hallmark of all adolescents’ development. However, some groups of adolescents experience more difficulty with this developmental transition. Most methods for assessing identity have rested on Marcia’s (1966) operationalization of the construct of identity in terms of two conceptual dimensions: crisis (or exploration) and commitment. Marcia described crisis as a period of engagement in choosing among meaningful alternatives (active questioning). Commitment is the degree of personal investment the individual exhibits (presence or absence of decisions in the areas of occupation and ideology). These two criteria were used to establish four identity statuses: Achievement, Moratorium, Foreclosure, and Diffusion.

Those individuals in the identity achievement status have experienced a crisis or exploration period and as a result have committed to an occupation and ideology. These

individuals tend to persevere longer on problems and maintain a realistic level of aspiration.

Flum (1994) provided empirically based profiles of each identity status for youth ages 14 to 18-years old. Flum felt that identity achievement was developmentally beyond most adolescents.

Individuals in moratorium are currently experiencing a period of crisis with commitments still rather vague. However, there is the appearance of an active struggle to make commitments (Marcia, 1966). Flum (1994) described adolescents in moratorium in terms of intrapersonal and interpersonal variables. Intrapersonally these adolescents are high in crisis and have a significant level of confusion. Interpersonally they have a high need to be alone as a vehicle to self-discovery. Additionally there is a low ability to withstand group pressure. A declared lack of commitment was also included in the moratorium profile.

Individuals in foreclosure have not experienced a crisis, yet have expressed a commitment to an occupation or ideology. It is difficult to tell for these individuals where their parent's goals have left off and theirs have begun. They have become what others have prepared or intended them to become as children. They endorse authoritarian values such as obedience, strong leadership, and respect for authority (Marcia, 1966). Adolescents in foreclosure are characterized by having a high external orientation and high self-esteem. There is a high dependency on parents or authority figures, and a low desire to be alone. These adolescents view future plans as controlled by external agents or circumstances. They respond negatively to being alone because it forces them to engage in introspection and self-examination, which they do not want (Flum, 1994).

Individuals in identity diffusion may or may not have experienced a crisis period; however, the hallmark characteristic is a lack of commitment. They have neither decided upon an occupation nor have much concern about it. They may mention a preferred occupation, but seem

to have little conception of its daily routine and give the impression that the choice could be easily abandoned should opportunities arise elsewhere (Marcia, 1966). Adolescents in identity diffusion are characterized by a high external orientation and low decisiveness. They have low dependency on parents, but high dependency on peers. These adolescents have a high asocial orientation and low ability to withstand group pressure. Adolescents in diffusion felt they did not control their future and therefore found it difficult to both plan ahead and make firm decisions. Their dependence on peers and inclination to distrust others is reflected in their asocial orientation. This strong group/peer commitment reflects an attempt to escape having to confront identity issues (Flum, 1994). A diffusion style was also more common among youth of low socioeconomic status (Flum).

Parallels exist between the characteristics of youth in identity diffusion and those classified as ED/BD, most importantly of which is the unsuccessful transition from adolescents to the adult world. Both groups of youth are unaware of the skills and abilities needed to be successfully employed and social skills deficits make gainful employment even more difficult.

Career Decision Making

Determining an occupational (vocational) identity is one of the central challenges of the identity formation process in late adolescence. The level of occupational commitment is related to the means by which an individual attains a coherent ego identity; therefore, if ego identity is clearly established it would be believed that a degree of occupational commitment could be expected. Exploration is a central component in identity formation, with career exploration comprising a large part of that exploration. Individuals who are exploring their identity also tend to be in the process of making a decision about an occupational commitment. Environmental and

self exploration with in the vocational domain is associated with exploration and commitment of the identity achieved status and inversely related to the diffusion status (Blustein et al., 1989).

Gati, et al. (1996) formed an empirically based taxonomy for career decision making difficulties. Their results showed that difficulties occur both prior to beginning the career decision process and during the process itself. The difficulties that occur prior to beginning the process fall under the category of Lack of Readiness and include lack of motivation, indeciveness, and dysfunctional myths such as the belief that there is an ideal career which can fulfill all aspirations. Difficulties that occur during the process of career decision making fall under the categories of Lack of Information and Inconsistent Information. Individuals may be lacking information about the career decision making process, self, occupations, and ways of obtaining information. Inconsistent information may be due to unreliable information, internal conflicts such as insufficient abilities for the requirements of a preferred career, and external conflicts such as disagreement between different significant others concerning the recommended career alternatives.

When considering these difficulties with the characteristics of ED/BD youth in mind, it seems that some parallels could be made. Each of the ten difficulties presented above seem as if they could be present for ED/BD adolescents. Lack of motivation for making a decision could result from the lack of success that these youth have experienced throughout their lives. A lack of both self and environmental exploration which would be evident through identity diffusion would leave ED/BD youth lacking information about both themselves and possible occupations. However, there currently is no research to support ED/BD students having a greater amount of career indecision or identity diffusion than their peers. The purpose of this study is to empirically support the theoretical parallels between emotional/behavioral disturbances, identity diffusion,

and career indecision in order to be able to create more effective transition plans for these students.

It is hypothesized that ED/BD students will have a greater amount of career indecision than their general education peers. Additionally, it is hypothesized that ED/BD students will have more identity diffusion than those students not receiving special education services.

CHAPTER THREE

Method

Participants

Twenty-two high school students volunteered to participate. Participants were males in grades 9 through 12 and ranged in age from 14 years old to 19 years old (mean age = 16 years). Participants in the ED/BD group ($n = 13$, mean age = 16 years) were all receiving special education services under IDEA. All of these students were receiving instruction through an alternative high school placement as a result of being removed from their home school districts for emotional/behavioral problems. The control group consisted of general education students matched for gender, age, and grade ($n = 9$, mean age = 16 years).

Instruments

Self-Directed Search (SDS) Forms E and R: 4th Ed.

The SDS (Holland, 1985) is an interest inventory which can be self administered and self scored. Participants are assessed within a number of categories including: occupational daydreams, activities, competencies, occupations, and self estimates. A rank ordering of the resultant summed subscale raw scores produces a two or three letter summary interest code which is said to represent the subject's vocational interest personality type. As reported in the SDS manual, median test-retest reliability of $r = .61$ for males and $r = .64$ for females over a 3-4 week period.

16 Personality Factor Questionnaire – Fifth Edition (16PF).

The 16PF Fifth Edition (Cattell, Cattell, & Cattell, 1993) provides scores on 16 normal primary personality scales and five global scales. Each primary scale contains 10-15 items in a three-choice answer format for a total of 185 questions. Raw scores are converted to Standard Ten Scores (Stens) that range from 1- 10 ($M = 5.5$, $SD = 2$). Internal consistencies for the

primary scales range from .68 to .87. Test-retest reliabilities from two weeks to two months range from .56 to .87. The time necessary for the population of interest to complete this measure did not allow for the administration of the entire 16PF. For the purpose of this study an abbreviated version of the 16PF, which included only the four factors which a panel of experts (two school psychology graduate students and a faculty member) felt were most pertinent, was administered. The factors that were used in this study include: Factor A (Warmth), Factor M (Abstractness), Factor Q2 (Self-Reliance) and Factor Q3 (Perfectionism) for a total of 42 questions.

Career Decision Scale (CDS).

The CDS (Osipow, 1982) is a self administered questionnaire consisting of 18 items rated on a four-point Likert-type scale (4 is exactly like me, 3 is very much like me, 2 is only slightly like me, and 1 is not at all like me). Raw scores are converted to percentiles based upon a national norm. The CDS assess participants' certainty about his/her decision about a college major and/or a career, as well as career indecision. The CDS manual indicated test-retest reliabilities ranging between .70 and .90.

Extended Objective Measure of Ego Identity Status – Revised (EOM-EIS-R)

The EOM-EIS Revised (Bennion & Adams, 1986) is a measure of ego identity status in ideological domains (occupation, politics, religion, and philosophical lifestyle) and in interpersonal domains (friendship, dating, sex roles, and recreation). Each of the eight domains is measured by eight items based on a five point Likert-type scale (1 strongly disagree, 2 moderately disagree, 3 agree, 4 moderately agree, 5 strongly agree). Each domain consists of two items for each identity status originally delineated by Marcia (1966), i.e. achievement, moratorium, foreclosure, and diffusion. For the purpose of this study, only the domains of

occupation, friendship, dating, and recreation were included. Bennion and Adams (1986) report internal consistencies ranging between .58 and .80.

Procedures

This study was approved by the institute's IRB. Consent forms were mailed home to potential participants' parents/guardians. Participants were selected using a sample of convenience. For the ED/BD group consent forms were sent to the parents of all students over the age of 14. Students in the control group were selected by their school psychologist. Once consent and assent forms were received all participants were assigned an identification number. Participants in the experimental group completed the instruments described above individually or in small groups during two 30 minute sessions. In the first session the participants completed the SDS followed by the four factor 16PF. In the second session participants completed the CDS and modified EMOIS-2 in alternating order by participant to control for order effects. Participants in the ED/BD group were given the option of reading the measures themselves, or to have the question read to them by the examiner. All participants in this group chose to have the questions read to them. Participants in the control group completed the measures in small groups during two sessions with measures being administered in the same fashion as the experimental group. All participants were offered a small snack to eat after each of their sessions.

Data Analyses

To address the hypotheses investigated in this study the following data analyses were completed: descriptive statistics, mean comparisons between groups using independent T-tests, correlations, and multiple regressions.

CHAPTER FOUR

Results

Displayed in Table 1 are percentages of current and past self employment and parental employment status between the ED/BD and control groups. Results indicate a significant difference in past employment for the EB/BD group as compared to the control group, with the ED/BD group having higher percentages of past employment, $\chi^2(1, N = 22) = 4.44, p \leq .05$. The opposite trend occurs for current employment. Additionally, there is a trend of higher percentage of parental employment in the control group compared to parents of the ED/BD group.

Shown in Table 2 are differences in percent of SDS scale items endorsed for ED/BD and control groups. For Conventional and Enterprising, the ED/BD group endorsed fewer scale items than the control, $t(21) = 20.35, p \leq .05$, $t(21) = 17.16, p \leq .05$, respectively. Furthermore, the Investigative, Artistic, and Social scale differences approached significance. No significant differences existed for the Realistic scale; however, it was the only scale where a higher percentage of items were endorsed by the ED/BD group.

Displayed in Table 3 are mean differences between the ED/BD and Control groups on number of dream jobs listed, and consistency, Iachan differentiation, and differentiation percentile on the SDS. No significant differences were found. However, a trend was observed whereby the control group reported a higher number of dream jobs than the ED/BD group.

The groups were also compared for differences on the 16PF personality factors, identity formation, and career indecision. Displayed in Table 4 are the mean differences between the ED/BD group and control group on the 16PF selected factors, Identity Formation, and the CDS. As expected, Independent t-tests for 16PF selected factors revealed that the ED/BD group was significantly lower in Warmth than the controls, $t(21) = 1.25, p = .05$. The ED/BD group

however, had higher scores on Factor Q2 – Self-reliance and Factor Q3 – Perfectionism than the control group, which approached significance. No group differences were observed for Factor M.

While significant differences were not obtained between groups for identity formation and career indecision, certain trends were observed. The ED/BD group scored higher on Identity Diffusion and lower on Identity Achievement than the control group. The ED/BD group was also lower on Career Certainty and higher on Career Indecision than the control group on the CDS.

Correlations were run between the SDS variables and 16PF factors. The intercorrelations are displayed on Table 5. As predicted by Holland's theory, there was a significant positive relationship between the SDS Social scale and Factor A – Warmth ($r = .49, p \leq .01$). Further, in accordance with Holland's theory, a significant negative relationship was noted between the SDS Realistic scale and Factor A ($r = -.39, p \leq .05$), and a significant positive relationship was observed between the SDS Realistic scale and Factor Q2 – Self-Reliance ($r = .36, p \leq .05$).

Shown in Table 6 are the pearson product moment correlation coefficients among the identity status variables and Career Indecision subscales. A significant positive relationship resulted between Identity Diffusion and Career Indecision ($r = .40, p \leq .05$) as expected. Further, a negative relationship exists between Identity Achievement and Career Indecision ($r = -.34, p \leq .05$).

Finally, a stepwise multiple regression analysis was performed using Career Indecision as the dependent variable and Identity Status as the independent variable. The results of the regression analysis are displayed on Table 7. As can be seen in Table 7, three of the identity status variables resulted in a significant multiple regression ($F_{3, 30} = 5.97, p < .003$). Identity Diffusion accounted for 17% of Career Indecision variance ($t_{21} = 2.66, p \leq .05$). Identity Achievement accounted for 13% of Career Indecision variance ($t_{21} = -2.48, p \leq .05$). Identity

Foreclosure accounted for 8% of Career Indecision variance ($t_{21} = 2.06, p. \leq .05$). The total variance (overall R^2) of career indecision accounted for by the identity status factors was 37%.

CHAPTER FIVE

Discussion

The results of the current study are best understood in light of past research with ED/BD students. Research indicates a lack of successful transitions for these students due to a number of factors, including personality conflicts.

In accordance with previous research, the ED/BD students in this study were unable to successfully hold jobs, as is evident by the higher percentage of students reporting past employment than current employment. Therefore, these students have either been terminated from or have quit previous jobs. This trend was not observed in students without disabilities. This finding suggests that some characteristics related to the ED/BD classification may interfere with maintaining employment. By definition, ED/BD students have an inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships, display inappropriate types of behavior and feeling under normal circumstances, and have a general pervasive mood or unhappiness or depression. These behaviors and lack of interpersonal skills would inevitably make maintaining employment difficult.

In addition, both the mothers and fathers of the ED/BD students tended to have lower rates of employment than the parents of the control group students. Research has concluded that parent involvement in student's school-to-work transitions is critical. The ED/BD group's parent's lack of employment suggests that these students did not have adequate role models for obtaining and maintaining employment, and may also not have had the necessary parental support for career exploration and transition considerations. The student's lack of career aspirations can be observed in the trend for ED/BD students reporting fewer dream jobs on the SDS than the controls. On average they listed only two jobs they might like to have after high

school, whereas the students in general education listed an average of four dream jobs.

Qualitatively, the ED/BD groups' aspirations tended to be more unrealistic and immature than those reported by the control group. Many of these students aspired to careers as professional athletes, entertainers, or business owners, careers that for most would be unattainable given their current skills and level of education.

Personality factors have an important relationship to career selection and the maintenance of employment. Interpersonal skills that relate to these personality factors are also critical to job success. This study found that ED/BD students' vocational personalities, as measured by the SDS, lacked interpersonal skills which probably interferes with job success. ED/BD students endorsed the highest percentage of items under Holland's Realistic type, indicating that they prefer work environment that permit them to avoid interactions with others, allow them to work with tools and things rather than people, and where they are rewarded for mechanical skills rather than social skills (Holland, 1997). This is not to say that all individuals who rate themselves as high on Type R will not experience successful employment. According to Holland's theory career success comes from the proper fit of vocational personality and work environment. When there is a lack of concordance between these two factors an individual is likely to be unhappy at his or her job and is also likely to be terminated, which is often the case for ED/BD students.

This personality description of ED/BD students was further corroborated by a strong association of 16PF personality factors with Holland's Type R. Students' in the ED/BD group ratings on selected factors of the 16PF created a personality profile that was significantly different than that of their non-disabled peers. Their significantly lower mean score on Factor A (Warmth) represents an individual who is reserved, aloof, detached, impersonal, unemotional,

and prefers solitary work. In accordance with low levels of Factor A, ED/BD students had high levels of Factor Q2 – Self-Reliance. This implies that they see themselves as self-sufficient, prefer their own ideas and opinions, and are solitary. The ED/BD students' sense of pride and need for control, translated into a trend for higher scores on Factor Q3 (Perfectionism) than the control group.

Taking this personality profile in to account, it becomes critical for those who work with ED/BD students on their transition plans to assist these students in understanding their personalities and how their personalities will impact career success and happiness. Once students have gained a better understanding of themselves through career counseling, the transition team can begin helping the student explore careers that will best fit their personality as well as provide the students with the interpersonal and vocational skills necessary to be successful in their chosen careers.

Previous research has determined that the identity formation process, especially as it relates to vocational identity is one of the central challenges of late adolescents. Results of this study indicate that the process of career decision making will be more difficult for ED/BD students than those in general education. As expected, a trend was observed where ED/BD students scored higher on Identity Diffusion and lower on Identity Achievement than students in the control group. As noted in the research, strong parallels exist between the profiles of youth in identity diffusion and those classified as ED/BD. Adolescents in identity diffusion and those classified at ED/BD have a high asocial orientation, lack trust in others, and have low levels of decisiveness. According to IDEA, transition plans must be based on the student's needs, taking into account the student's preferences and interests. This is extremely difficult if not impossible to do for a student stuck in career indecision and who does not have a clear set of preferences or

interests. A student's IEP must include a statement of transition needs that relate directly to the student's goals beyond secondary education, and have a systematic program that relates to these goals. Again, it would not be feasible for a transition team to create an accurate IEP or transition program for a student that does not have clear goals for his or her future, which this research implies is the case for ED/BD students.

Due to a number of factors, including lack of parental role modeling and removal from general education settings, ED/BD students may not have had the same opportunities for career exploration as their general education peers. Therefore, transition planning may have to take a step backwards from creating a plan to correspond with the student's interests, and instead assist the student in honing his or interest through exploration and counseling.

In addition to the ramification of these results on the transition planning process, this study found a clear relationship between identity diffusion and career indecision. This applies to all adolescents, not just those with disabilities. Given this association, it seems that all adolescents would benefit from help through the identity formation process.

Future Research

This study has served to clarify the role of personality, identity formation, and career indecision in effective school-to-work transition planning for ED/BD students. The personality profile of ED/BD students that was created through the use of selected 16PF factors and the CDS offers insight into the poor transition outcomes that have been observed for these students. A lack of fit between student's personalities and the work environments they may choose make the maintenance of satisfying employment difficult. Future research should focus on the usefulness of a personality profile, as well as levels of career indecision in the implementation of career counseling interventions. Researchers should investigate effective interventions that help

students better understand themselves in terms of their personalities, as well as understand how personality fits with career choice to effect job success.

Limitations

The current study is limited by the sample of students that was available for the ED/BD group. Because of the special nature of this population, a large pool of participants was unavailable, resulting in a relatively small sample size. This limitation also required the sample to be one of convenience, therefore, limiting the generalizability of these results to the entire ED/BD population. This study is further limited by the Identity Diffusion measure that was used. The ED/BD group had a difficult time comprehending the nature of these questions, making the measure not fully sensitive enough to address adequately the hypothesis.

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Table 1

Frequency of Employment Status & Percentage Employment Status for ED/BD & Control Group

	ED/BD (n = 13)	Control (n = 9)	
Employment Status	Percentage	Percentage	Percentage Difference
Currently Employed	46.2	55.6	9.4
Employed in Past	61.5	22.2	39.3
Mother Employed	69.2	88.9	19.7
Father Employed	46.2	77.8	31.6

Table 2

Percentage of SDS Scale Items Endorsed for ED/BD and Control Groups

SDS Variable	ED/BD (n = 13)		Control (n = 9)		M Diff.
	M	SD	M	SD	
Realistic	63.90	21.64	53.11	19.82	10.79
Investigative	32.93	25.37	46.44	16.60	13.51†
Artistic	34.51	25.78	49.11	24.68	14.60†
Social	35.30	26.02	49.77	13.76	14.47†
Enterprising	51.28	20.51	68.44	16.39	17.16*
Conventional	22.09	24.42	42.44	17.79	20.35*

* $p < .05$, one-tailed. † $p < .10$, one-tailed.

Table 3

Mean Differences Between ED/BD and Control on Number of Dream Jobs, Consistency, and Differentiation

	ED/BD (n = 13)		Control (n = 9)		M Diff.
	M	SD	M	SD	
Number of Dream Jobs	2.08	0.95	4.00	1.65	1.92
Consistency	1.69	0.48	2.00	0.50	0.31
Iachan Differentiation	5.71	3.26	5.11	1.92	0.60
Differentiation Percentile	49.00	28.43	47.11	22.72	1.89

* $p < .05$, one-tailed. † $p < .10$, one-tailed.

Table 4

Mean Differences Between ED/BD and Control Groups on 16PF Selected Factors, Identity Formation Factors and CDS Scales

Test Variable	ED/BD (n = 13)		Control (n = 9)		MD
	M	SD	M	SD	
Factor A Warmth	4.31	1.54	5.56	1.66	1.25*
Factor M - Abstractness	6.77	1.23	6.67	1.58	0.10
Factor Q2 – Self-reliance	5.69	1.79	4.44	1.66	1.25†
Factor Q3 - Perfectionism	5.00	1.52	4.00	1.41	1.00†
Identity Diffusion	2.22	0.31	2.01	0.55	0.21
Identity Moratorium	2.31	0.49	2.33	0.48	0.02
Identity Foreclosure	1.66	0.43	1.50	0.31	0.16
Identity Achievement	3.16	0.33	3.37	0.38	0.21
CDS Certainty	70.46	32.75	72.78	31.36	2.32
CDS Indecision	57.00	29.30	50.56	26.66	6.44

* $p < .05$, one-tailed. † $p < .10$, one-tailed.

Note for 16PF Factors A, M, Q2, Q3. Scores are Sten Scores – Standard 10's, that range from 1 – 10 ($M = 5.5$, $SD = 2$). Identity Formation scores are means of raw scores that range from 1 -5.

CDS scores are based on percentiles.

Table 5

Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficients Between the SDS and 16PF

SDS Variable	16PF Factor			
	Factor A	Factor M	Factor Q2	Factor Q3
Realistic	-.39*	.27	.36*	.00
Investigative	-.00	.26	.04	-.23
Artistic	.21	.31	.02	-.07
Social	.49**	-.03	-.20	-.02
Enterprising	.19	.23	.12	-.11
Clerical	.14	.26	.23	.03

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Table 6

Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficients Among Identity Status Variables & Career Indecision Subscales

Variables	Diffusion	Moratorium	Foreclosure	Achievement
Moratorium	.19	-		
Foreclosure	.07	.10	-	
Achievement	-.00	-.10	.03	-
Indecision	.40*	.22	.31	-.34*

* $p < .05$.

Table 7

Stepwise Multiple Regression of Identity Factors onto Career Indecision

Predictor Variables	R	R ² change	Beta	t
Identity Diffusion	.40	.17	.39	2.66*
Identity Achievement	.53	.12	-.36	-2.48*
Identity Foreclosure	.61	.08	.30	2.06*

*p < .05.

n = 2.